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HUMOR IN HOMER AND IN VERGIL

(Concluded from page 172)

Ignorance, whether ironically assumed, or genuine, has always been a prime subject for comic representation. The individual fool, or the fool community, Abdera, Atella, Schildburg, Gotham, are popular if only because they arouse in their hearers that sudden glory of superiority in which some find the very quintessence of laughter. The depiction of intellectual deficiency is but a step from the description of physical deformity. Of course, in fact, physical peculiarity, as the more obvious, is described the earlier⁷. In all lands it has been a prime source of amusement. It was the physical deformity of Hephaestus (Iliad 1. 599-600) that stirred the gods to that burst of uproarious mirth which was destined to enrich modern literature with the expression 'Homeric laughter'. In Iliad 2.216-219 we meet the famous description of Thersites,

The ugliest man was he who came to Troy;]
With squinting eyes and one distorted foot,
His shoulders round and buried in his breast,
His narrow head with scanty growth of hair....

This form of humor Vergil seems to deny himself. One may say that the Aeneid is quite free from any description, comically intended or otherwise, of physical deformity. This means among other things that Vergil's epic is further from the folk-product, from the life, almost equally coarse, of farmstead and palace. In only one portion of his work, Book 5, does Vergil attempt comic description. That description deals with events, not with persons. Here Vergil leans hard on Homer. In a recent article on The Comic Aspect of the Greek Athletic Meet⁸, I tried to show how this element of comedy permeated descriptions of athletic contests. Homer has it in his account of the defeat of Irus by Odysseus, at which the assembled wooers threw up their hands and died outright for laughter (Odyssey 18.99-100). At the funeral games of Patroclus shouts of laughter greet Epeius as he hurls a ponderous weight through the air (Iliad 23. 839-840).

At these games occurs, too, the incident of Ajax Oileus and Odysseus (Iliad 23.773-784), which Vergil copies rather closely in Book 5. As Homer depicts it, Ajax falls in the race with Odysseus at a place where the offal of sacrificed animals had made the footing treacherous. He rises at once, no savory sight, and in an extremely unpleasant frame of mind. With mouth and nostrils full of filth he yet finds voice to rail at Pallas, who, he says, has really carried her notorious fondness for Odysseus to quite unconscionable lengths.

He manages to raise a laugh, partly at himself for his picturesque plight, but partly, too, at Odysseus, with whom Athena's favor, or, perhaps rather, the everlasting banter about it, cannot have been other than a very sore point. Vergil, who seldom tries to imitate Homeric humor, has made an exception here. The very halting (might I say titubation?) caused by the excessive use of the letter *t*, *vestigia...haut tenuit titubata solo* (5.331-332: initial *t* in two successive words, each time following a final *t*), accentuates the stumble and the stagger; we see Nisus face down in the filth and the gore. He makes a friendly, if unsportsmanlike, attempt to assure Euryalus the victory if he cannot have it himself. As soon as the race is over, Salius 'fills the faces of the foremost fathers with complaints' that he has been fouled by Nisus (341-342). Aeneas quiets him with a tactful compliment and a substantial consolation prize (348-352). Nisus at once seizes the opportunity to put in his claim for a prize because the same fortune that had cheated Salius had cheated him (352-356). He shamelessly and conveniently forgets that not accident, but his own contriving had caused Salius's misfortune. His actions and his appearance are too much for Aeneas, who breaks into a laugh at him (358), but orders valuable gifts to be given to him, and sends him off contented (359-361). In this incident Vergil has gone far beyond Homer.

Nor is the fun in Vergil to be found only here. He introduces comic elements not only into the boxing-match, as Homer had done in Odyssey 18, but also into the boat-race. Taking up first the latter, we note that the comedy begins when Gyas, having urged his pilot Menoetes to hug the shore, flings his refractory subordinate into the sea, after his disobedience has given the inside track to a rival boat (5.160-180). Menoetes's fall, described by the word *labentem* (181), stirs the Trojans to laughter. He seems to have remained under water an unconscionably long time, but he finally emerges and strikes out for an islet of rock. In relief at his eventual and long expected emergence, or for some other reason, the Trojans laugh again (182). Their mirth is accentuated when the old man reaches the rock, scrambles on to it, his dripping garments suggesting that he is turning to water, *madidaque fluens in veste* (179).

Presently Sergestus and his crew get into trouble, by trying to squeeze in where there is no room. They run aground on a projecting reef with their prow well out of water (201-206). With shouts they try to push themselves off the reef with boat-hooks and to collect their shattered oars (207-209). As Mnesteus and his Pristis sweep by them, they are comically described as taking a lesson in rowing with broken oars (220-222). When they finally bring their boat

⁷Professor Knapp reminds me of the references in Roman *cognomina* to physical peculiarity or deformity. <Compare e.g. Horace, Sermones 1.3.44-48. C. K.>

⁸The Classical Journal 21.643-653.

to the finish line, they are compared to a snake that has been run over by a car or grievously wounded by a pedestrian (270-275). The people greet them with laughter or jeers, but Aeneas, kindly as ever, gives them a reward, partly because he had promised one to each contestant, partly because he was so relieved to see the valuable craft, which had seemed hopelessly aground, safe and effective (282-283).

The other comic incident is the boxing-match. Here Vergil had two models in Homer, the Irus-Odysseus fight (Odyssey 18.66-116) and the brief affair between Epeius and Euryalus in the funeral games of Patroclus (Iliad 23.664-699). The latter is an unusually tame and gentlemanly performance. The only elements of humor in it are the initial boasting of Epeius and the picture of Euryalus 'knocked out' (692-694):

And as a fish that flounders on the sand,
Thrown by rude Boreas on the windy beach,
So floundered he beneath that stunning blow.

Add to this the description of his departure from the scene (696-697):

with dragging steps
Spitting forth clotted gore, his heavy head
Rolling from side to side. . . .

This last detail Vergil employs. The preliminaries, however, are influenced by the account of the Irus-Odysseus fight. But here Vergil again has gone far beyond his models. As soon as the boxing is proposed, Dares enters for the contest. His great size and strength are emphasized (5.368), and his pugilistic record is duly given. He is put through his paces before us (376-377). No opponent for him appears at first, and so, with unduly optimistic haste, he wants the prize to be awarded to him *instante*. His time is too valuable for him to be kept standing there waiting for an opponent (383-385). He acts much as Epeius acts in Iliad 23. But Epeius 'made good'. Vergil shows more art than Homer. Such over-confidence as Dares displays alienates our sympathy. Dares is riding for a fall, and the poet owes it to us to let us see his fall. Dares has the sympathy of the crowd (385-386). But aged Acestes is prodding his friend Entellus with all the memories of olden days (387-393). The old boxer answers sorrowfully that he is not the man he used to be (394-400). There is, I think, a purposeful contrast between his words and the insistence of Dares (385) that the prize be given to him at once. Entellus's words sound like a refusal to engage, but all at once Entellus flings into the ring a marvellous and very business-like set of gloves, a legacy from his boxing-master. His very possession of them was reason enough why Acestes should select him to be the challenger. In Entellus's immediate vicinity these gloves must have been a most conspicuous object: seven oxhides, stiffened with abundant iron and lead! The next verse (406) is a gem; it was inspired by the picture of Irus when he sees Odysseus stripped for the fray (Odyssey 16.66-78). Aeneas himself doubtfully turns the gauntlets this way and that as they lie on the ground. The old fighter, not willing to lose the opportunity of impressing those who are so clearly

impressed already, asks them what they would have said if they could have seen the *caestus* of Hercules and the gloomy battle on the spot where they were then standing (410-411). He points out the traces of blood and brains on the ancient weapons with which Eryx had faced Hercules on that fateful day (412-413), and modestly but significantly adds that he used to be quite equal to wielding these *caestus* himself before he grew so old (414-416). Of course he had never seriously intended to enter the contest with these antiquated weapons. He consents to waive his right to do so if Dares will give up the formidable looking *caestus* which he is wearing. Then, like Odysseus in the Odyssey (18.66-69), he strips and shows in mid-arena his impressively magnificent physique (421-423). New weapons are selected for both, and the fight begins. The comic tone is perceptible even amid the serious details, in such words as *erratque auris et tempora circum crebra manus* (435-436). The words might be used of a caress. Entellus is fighting in an old-fashioned way, a risky procedure against a younger opponent. He rises on tiptoe to bring down a crushing blow upon his opponent's head. But, when the blow falls, the opponent, who has seen it coming, is not there. Entellus not only fans the air (*viris in ventum effudit*, 446), but actually overbalances himself and pitches heavily to the ground, quite unassisted (*ultra*). Picked up by friendly hands, he starts a fierce offensive, and drives Dares headlong all about, battering him now with his right hand, now with his left. The sound produced is comically and hyperbolically compared to the rattle of hail on a roof (458-459). Dares must be rescued by his countrymen if they do not want a tragedy on their hands. Vergil's account of the rescue (468-470) is highly effective. The words *genua . . . trahentem*, 'dragging his knees', are more comical than Homer's expression, 'dragging his feet'; the blood and the rolling head are Homer's, but the teeth mixed with the blood are an addition by Vergil, and, much as we may sympathize with Dares, a distinctly comic addition.

There is a less distinct but clearly perceptible comic touch in the picture of the old victor felling the bull with a blow to show *a fortiori* how strong he was when he was young and from what a death his countrymen had rescued Dares (474-480). It is at this point and in the spirit of this description that Vergil gives us that famous onomatopoetic line (481) with the monosyllabic *bos* at the end, with which he reproduces for us the impression of the thud of the falling victim. All this has been hard on Dares, but worse are the words in which Entellus, in his prayer, consoles Eryx, his deified master, for the loss of his proper victim, Dares, by calling the brute bull *melior anima* (482-484).

It appears to me that in this one passage, part of the account of the games, Vergil consciously sets himself to outrival the humor of his Greek model. In other passages he omits or slurs the humorous element; here he amplifies it and improves upon it.

Homer often substitutes a comic comparison for a longer description, often with no loss of comic effect. The garrulity of the old men on the wall of Troy hard

by the Scaean Gate is well hit off by calling them (Iliad 3.150-152) "in discourse abundant, as the cricket that on high from topmost boughs of forest tree sends forth his delicate music".

As one looks at pictures by a Hals or a Jordaens, he cannot help wondering if the *genre* is not essentially and intrinsically comic. Certainly some of Homer's *genre* pictures are steeped in the comic. The slow stubborn retreat of Ajax, most dignified and old-fashioned of warriors, driven back by overwhelming troops of Trojans, is compared (Iliad 11.558-562) to that of a stubborn ass "upon whose sides had many a club been broke", an ass that overpowers his boy guides, and wins into a grainfield where rich forage falls to his maw. Meanwhile the boys their cudgels ply. But vain their puny strength. Yet they drive him out, when he is fully fed, with ease. There is a similar element of the *genre* used with similar effect in the account of the attack made on the Trojans by Patroclus and his Myrmidons (Iliad 16.259-267):

and as wasps
That have their nest beside the public road,
Which boys delight to vex and irritate
In wanton play, but to the general harm,
Them, if some passing traveler unawares
Disturb, with angry courage forth they rush
In one continuous swarm to guard their nest;
Even with such courage poured the Myrmidons
Forth from their ships.

The poet has gone out of his way to introduce a bit of *genre* whose very incongruity with epic style imports a flavor of humor. Here the point is the boldness of the wasp; elsewhere (Iliad 17.570-572) the point is that of the fly

Which oft repelled by man, renews the assault
Incessant, lured by taste of human blood.

There is a curious simile describing the situation of Odysseus tormented by the sight of the wantonness and the haughtiness of the woman domestics of his household and uncertain whether to slay them offhand or to allow them an opportunity to accord their paramours one last embrace (Odyssey 20.24-29). In this frame of mind he

turned from side to side
As when some hungry swain turns off a maw
Unctuous and savory on the burning coals
Quick expediting his desired repast;
So he from side to side rolled, pondering deep
How likeliest with success he might assail
Those shameless suitors.

Vergil uses the simile far less than Homer and manages to keep out the humorous element (or to reduce it to a minimum). Another Homeric feature which Vergil lacks is burlesque of the gods. It begins in our earliest extant Greek literature, the Iliad. We are allowed to glimpse the conjugal infelicity of the supreme deity and to overhear the repeated taunts which he has to endure from the wife and the sister of his bosom. The same feature recurs in the description of divine intervention in the marital affairs of men. The mere mention of these would in any case, to a thoughtful mind, subject the idea of the divine to a certain loss of

dignity, through portrayal of the divided counsels of the gods and the inevitably consequent limitation of their powers. Vergil carries us as far as this. But Homer goes much further. He is frankly out to poke fun at the gods. With more than a dash of malice, though not with any definite and obvious hostility, he is trying to make men laugh at them. Zeus himself is obviously amused at the petty squabbling of the gods; why should not man be admitted to share the amusement of the supreme deity? In Iliad 21.391-399, Ares berates Athena, and accuses her of being the one who inspired Diomedes to wound him. In vain he hurls his spear at her tasselled shield, awful to view (401-402). She retorts by picking up a fair-sized boulder, and planting it full on his neck, so that he lies stretched out over a space of some seven hundred feet (403-407). Aphrodite, running to his aid, raises him up (416-417). Hera sees that she is about to lead him from the field: so she sends Athena in pursuit (418-422). Athena strikes Aphrodite on the breast, and leaves her lying prostrate by her lover's side (423-426). Poseidon, meeting Apollo in the press, says it would be rather bad form for them to return to the brazen floor of Zeus without even the semblance of a fight and invites him, as the younger, to begin the attack (435-440). Apollo declines to assail his muscular uncle (462-467), and thereby earns a sharp rebuke from his twin sister, who charges him with being a poltroon (468-477). Hera, in turn, rails at Artemis, seizes her by both wrists, and with one matronly hand, the left, too, tears bow and quiver from her shoulders and boxes her ears with the arrows. The maiden goddess abandons the field in tears, leaving her arrows for her sympathizing mother Leta to pick up (478-510).

In Odyssey 8.266-366 the famous lay of Demodocus involves in scandal two of these same deities. The passage is more daring than anything in the Iliad, and would be destructive of all respect for the gods, were it not for some ritual religious element in such burlesque.

Much of humor lies in incongruity. A type of incongruity which it is possible to handle in such a way as to appeal to the humorous in us is hyperbole. Homer uses it sparingly. Ares, wounded in battle, cries out as if 9,000 or 10,000 men should simultaneously raise their battle cry (Iliad 5.859-863); when he falls prostrate, he covers some 700 feet of space (Iliad 21.407). Much finer is the hyperbole when the goatherd tells his unrecognized master (Odyssey 17.221-222) that he shall rub smooth many a post that props him while he begs alms, sole object of his low pursuit. Hyperbole is in some degree an ingredient in most comedy. Every hyperbole is, almost by hypothesis, an impossibility. The incongruity lies in the contrast or conjunction of truth with impossibility. One form of it common in America is incommensurability. Such an expression as "A tree so darn tall that it took two men and a boy to see to the top of it" involves a comparison the very impossibility of which arouses a smile. There is one clear instance of this in the Iliad (20.246-247). There Aeneas, anxious to end a squabble of words, says that it would be easy to find terms of abuse whose weight

might sink a galley of a hundred oars. Such humor is sometimes allied to that of ignorance or misinterpretation. In this case, a metaphor such as is involved in the expression "weighty words" is interpreted physically.

Vergil uses hyperbole more sparingly even than Homer. In the account of the fight at the walls (10.128), a warrior picks up a rock, *haut partem exiguam montis*. There are doubtless other instances of hyperbole, as in the description of the storm in Book 1, and in 12. 896-900, strongly influenced by Homer, but the element of humor is excluded.

There is one other type of impossibility in Homer which one of Dörpfeld's theories would eliminate. Newcomers to the island of Ithaca were sometimes asked by what ship they reached the island, 'for of course you did not come on foot' (Odyssey 1.173). This is clearly humorous, a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*, if it is applied to a real island. But Dörpfeld stoutly maintains that Ithaca was the land that was later called Leucas, and that this, now a peninsula, was, in Homeric days, connected with the mainland by a shoal, over which it was possible to pass on foot, though it was very unlikely that strangers would be sufficiently acquainted with the topography to make use of it. By this theory there is no *reductio ad absurdum*, but merely the mention of an alternative, though unlikely, approach to the island.

Incongruity and hyperbole are wedded in the comic lie, as Aristophanes employed it in *The Birds*, and Lucian glorified it in *The True History*. Among the marvels related by Odysseus many bear the clear stamp of the traveler's yarn, none perhaps more so than the account of his experience as he approached the whirlpool of Charybdis astride the keel of his wrecked ship—his 'raft' (Odyssey 12.429-444). Charybdis sucks this in, but not before the hero has caught at the branches of a wild fig that overhangs the place. There he clung, batlike, apparently supported only by his hands, and there he remained from sunrise till in the late afternoon Charybdis erupted its morning mouthful, in which Odysseus was delighted to observe his precious raft. Into the water he drops, gets astride the keel once more, and moves expeditiously out of the dangerous locality, using his hands paddle fashion.

From the humor of the obscene the Homeric Poems are nearly free. There is nothing funny in marital infidelity; to all right thinking folk it is the grimmest tragedy. But what is crime for man is food for fun when it is practised by divinity, which is not bound by the moral shackles which bind human beings. The predicament of Ares and Aphrodite, snared by the blacksmith husband's craft, and exhibited in *flagrante delicto*, arouses the intense amusement of at least the male members of the Olympic family (Odyssey 8.321-344).

A type of humor that is characteristically Greek and has been called 'cosmic humor', for what reason I know not, compares the lot or the character of man and beast only to adjudge the latter the superior. Zeus finds the horses of Peleus superior to Achilles, the son of Peleus (Iliad 17.443-444). The horses are im-

mortal and divine. For that reason the element of cosmic humor is here not so distinct, but the thought that lies deep at the root of such talk is clearly phrased when Zeus goes on to say (Iliad 17.446-447),

of all that breathe
And walk upon the earth or creep, is nought
More wretched than the unhappy race of men.

This thought appears in many literatures, including the Hebrew, where it is precisely man's distinguishing characteristic, his intellect, that makes him more wretched than the beast. In the ancient burlesque epic of *The Battle of the Frogs and the Mice* there are several hints that man is not much more powerful than the mouse. Plowman Robert Burns expressed this idea in homely and immortal verse. Since the frogs are represented as superior in power to the gods as well, we may recognize hyperbole in the description of the exploits of the little creatures rather than any sense of cosmic humor. But the way is being prepared for such humor. In the *Aeneid* (5.483) it is approached at least in the taunting prayer of Entellus, who offers the deified Eryx a bull, *melior anima*, in place of the death of Dares.

I pass now to a brief discussion of the occasions of laughter in Vergil. Homeric laughter forms an interesting study. I have dealt with it (in *The Classical Journal* 23.436-447). I found, of course, that it is almost always caused by someone else's pain or discomfiture. It punctuates the taunt of the victor over his victim. The only wholly pleasant laugh is that of Hector at the pranks of his boy (Iliad 6.471). The Homeric smile follows the same general course. It accompanies reviling and flavors sarcasm. But more often it accompanies affectionate dalliance or banter.

Vergil gives us two whole and hearty laughs. Aeneas laughs at the beplastered face and figure of Nisus (5.358), and the Trojans laugh at the half-drowned Menoetes (5.181-182). We have a quiet laugh when Venus laughs in her sleeve at the machinations of her rival, Juno, which she sees through, and plans to counter (4.128)⁹.

The suggestion in the word *inridere* is not quite so frank and unequivocal. It seems to imply something of a jeer when Sergestus brings his lamed vessel, *inrisam . . . ratem*, to the finish line (5.272). Turnus scoffs at what he supposes to be an old woman (7.435). We know that she is the Fury Allecto in disguise, and we forbode that his mirth will do him no good. The Fury has just warned him that, if he persists in exposing himself to unwarranted perils, people will laugh at him and he will get only his trouble for his reward. Dido fears the scorn of her rejected suitors (4.534-536).

Occasionally a smile passes over the face of one of Vergil's characters. There is the smile of conscious superiority with which Turnus, shut up in the enemy's camp, invites Pandarus to combat, warning him that,

⁹I am inclined to agree with Professor Knapp (*American Journal of Philology* 38.199) that there is a touch of humor in *Aeneid* 1. 739-740, *pleno se proluit auro*, especially when we compare *multa proluit vappa naula*, Horace, *Sermones* 1.5.16, and Plautus's coarse expression, *propere prolue cloacam* (*Curculio* 123). <I would call especial attention to what I say in this article about humor in the *Georgics*. C. K.>

when the fight is over, he will be telling Priam (down in Hades) that on Italian soil also there lived and fought an Achilles (9.740-742). Similarly, in a passage of slaughter, Mezentius pronounces sentence of death upon the wounded and prostrate Orodes, with a smile, mixed with wrath, a fine and daring combination (10.742-744).

In two instances the Vergilian smile is free from disagreeable elements. In the bosom of his family, while Aeneas is pursuing Turnus on the field and the poem is marching swiftly to its close, as the fates of death gather over the doomed Turnus, Jupiter tells Juno that her persecution of the Trojans has reached its bound and must stop. With surprising submissiveness Juno consents to abandon Turnus to his fate on condition that Troy be never rebuilt—a bit of up to date political propaganda, by the way. With a smile of understanding, if not of actual approval, Jupiter remarks that she has spoken like a true sister of Jove and a daughter of Saturn (12.829-830), implacable to the bitter end against all her foes. He smiles at his daughter Cytherea as he kisses her and grants her request (1.254-256)¹⁰.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

JOSEPH WILLIAM HEWITT

Geschichte der Sozialen Frage und des Sozialismus in der Antiken Welt. By Robert von Pöhlmann. Dritte Auflage, Durchgesehen und um einen Anhang Vermehrt von Friedrich Oertel. 2 volumes. München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung (1925). Pp. xiv + 448, x + 612.

The unusual book which is the subject of this review carries on its title page the modest but rather misleading statement: "Dritte Auflage, Durchgesehen und um einen Anhang Vermehrt von Friedrich Oertel". It is more than a 'third edition to which an appendix has been added'; it is the reprinting of an old classic by a scholar who, at the end of the work, gives a new interpretation of its materials which strikes at the very foundations of the original.

Aside from the material in the book, it is interesting to observe how its two strata belong to a series of great re-evaluations of classical civilization. After the complacent half-knowledge of the Middle Ages, and the boundless enthusiasm of the humanists, there have come successively a period of subservient reverence in the seventeenth century, one concerned with philosophical and idealistic interpretation in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth, and, finally, as a reaction to this last, one with a strong economic bias. In all these periods men have viewed classical life and thought in the light of their own dominant interests. The present is an age which, if I may coin an adjective, may be described as economic-conscious. Our literature and art, as well as our institutions, history and science, are all subject to investigation from this new point of view, and with our habit of seeking the economic

basis goes the natural tendency to read back into antiquity the principles which, we have come to feel, lie at the root of our own culture. Thus for example the Trojan War becomes an economic struggle for Black Sea markets¹, the development of a Roman protectorate in the East is viewed merely as another sordid instance of imperialism fostered by large commercial interests, and the Hellenistic Age is represented almost as the modern world *in parvo*². Whether the economic interpretation of current history is sound or not does not concern me here; I am inclined to think, however, that we have gone too far in that interpretation of the ancient world. Certainly the book under review is an example of the tendency and of the consequent necessity for radical revision.

The first edition of von Pöhlmann's *Geschichte der Sozialen Frage und des Sozialismus in der Antiken Welt* appeared in 1893, the second in 1912. The work thus belonged to an era which had, by reason of the industrial difficulties of the latter part of the nineteenth century, become extraordinarily sensitive to economic phenomena. But socialism, like other doctrines, changes with its adherents. Its theory and its practice have in the past fifteen years assumed different outlines, and with them has changed our evaluation of the socialism of the ancient world. Von Pöhlmann's brilliantly written work had taken its place as one of the modern classics, but meanwhile the ground under its feet had, as it were, shifted, and for readers of the present day the book needed not merely to be brought up to date but either to be rewritten or superseded. The former course was almost impossible. The second was adopted by the editor. Ostensibly, however, the result is not a new work, for editor and publishers have been careful to leave von Pöhlmann's text untouched. Professor Oertel has, however, added two appendices, the significance of which can be understood only after some explanation of von Pöhlmann's work.

Reduced to its simplest form von Pöhlmann's theory runs as follows. Socialism is the opponent of the capitalistic system, and disputes with it the control over agriculture, industry, and trade. This struggle is characterized by class warfare, which has a twofold aspect: in the country the growth of a capitalist class drives the farm laborer into the city, in the city the lines are drawn between proletariat (i.e. the employees) and capitalists (i.e. the employers). This is of course quite the situation of our modern world, and, in order to prove his thesis, von Pöhlmann is forced to regard the ancient data upon which it rests as substantially the same as those of our own day. We are introduced therefore to a familiar world of factories and mass-

¹There could have been no better illustration of this tendency than a recent moving-picture entitled *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*. Burlesque, shoddy, and altogether unfaithful to the facts, the version was to me nevertheless significant for its confident assumption that the struggle for Troy, like that involved in any modern war, was the result of economic rivalry.

²Conditions in the Hellenistic period present so many similarities to those of our own day that it is tempting to lay too much stress on them and to overlook the differences. The scale on which political, social, and artistic movements were carried out is so much larger than that of the preceding periods on the Greek mainland that we are likely to forget that the magnitude is only relative. This is the explanation of the exaggerated importance assigned to economics in this late period. See Professor Oertel's remarks (2.540-542).

¹⁰There are fine laughs in the Eclogues of Vergil (3. 9; 4. 20; 4. 62; 6. 23; 7. 55). Of these 7.55 and 4.20 are figurative and non-human. The one in Ciris, 103, is also purely figurative (*videntia litora*).

production, of economic motives, of the labor problem and its relation to capital, and so on. The period of colonization (750–500 B. C.) becomes a commercial struggle for new markets, with new colonists supplying mother cities with raw materials in exchange for manufactured products; the fifth and the fourth centuries show the rise of capitalism, with the growth of a highly developed trade, and the omnipresent struggle for new markets. Von Pöhlmann's theory was complete before the mass of papyri had begun to appear; otherwise he would have been able to show consistently that the Hellenistic period brought about increasing centralization of capital and industry and intensified the class struggle.

Put thus baldly the theory suggests its own criticism. It is too modern. Max Weber in 1911 argued³ that socialism in antiquity was an impossibility, for "die Grundlagen für eine sozialistische Bewegung fehlen". The fact is simply that in matters of ancient economics we are still astonishingly ignorant. The deplorable lack of statistics, for one thing, makes modern argument about ancient capital or labor seem thin and futile. It now seems certain at any rate that von Pöhlmann's theory of the highly developed and complex nature of ancient economy is no longer tenable, for it is based too exclusively on specious modern analogies⁴, and that the opposing 'primitive' theory, if it be accepted, rules out the very existence of socialism.

To the specialist in economic history, therefore, von Pöhlmann's book will continue to be valuable, even if only for its brilliant exposition and its able marshaling of the ancient data; the general student of ancient culture will do well to pass over the whole of the work and confine himself to the sketch by Professor Oertel. This is in the form of two Appendices, the first a statement of the fundamental issue (Das Hauptproblem, 2511–571), the second a critical bibliography (Literaturnachträge, Einzelbemerkungen und Berichtigungen, 572–585), and, finally, two full Indices (586–611).

Professor Oertel introduces his work with a compact summary of von Pöhlmann's theory (511–513) and of the controversy it aroused (513–514), and then (514) states his own problem and aim:

Bei dieser Sachlage ergibt sich die Notwendigkeit, in aller Kürze das Gesamtproblem mit seinem Für und Wider aufzurollen, wobei es unvermeidbar ist, die Struktur der antiken Wirtschaft einzubegreifen. Es ist zu untersuchen, ob die Prämissen des Sozialismus vorhanden sind—kapitalistische Wirtschaftsordnung, ein Proletariat, das in sie verflochten—, und ob es einen Sozialismus als kollektivistische Massenforderung gegeben hat, wobei sich dann die Einmündung in das grosse Problem des Verhältnisses von Altertum und Gegenwart von selbst ergibt. Dabei genügt es im allgemeinen, die Verhältnisse des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts in den Vordergrund zu stellen.

³The remark is cited by Oertel, 2514, note 5.

⁴Alfred E. Zimmern, one of the most determined opponents of von Pöhlmann's theory, exposes, in a caustic criticism of E. Meyer's *Die Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums*, this tendency to confuse the issue by too glib identification of ancient and modern economic problems (see his book, *The Greek Commonwealth*, 258 [Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1924]). The English reader who desires a sound statement of the primitive character of Greek economics will do well to read Zimmern, pages 220–227, 293–300.

He begins accordingly with a section on the economic basis of ancient capitalism (*Die Kapitalistische Wirtschaftsordnung*, 514–516). Then follows a detailed discussion of the problem of large-scale production (*Die Kapitalistische Grossindustrie*, 516–542). After handling the 'positive' and 'negative' viewpoints, i.e. the theories of the complex or the primitive nature of the ancient economic system, Professor Oertel treats particularly the situation in the fifth and the fourth centuries and in the Hellenistic Roman period, for here our information is fullest and here, if at all, the Greek system may be compared with the modern. Then follows a consideration of the labor problem (*Die Arbeiterfrage*, 542–553), in which the editor points out the presence of a free proletariat but (553) defines it closely: "Dieses Proletariat war aber entweder Konsumentenproletariat oder, wo es sich um abhängiges Produzenten(Arbeiter)proletariat handelte, höchstens ein agrarisches, jedenfalls kein durch einheitliche Interessen verschweisstes industrielles Massenproletariat".

With the ground thus cleared, Professor Oertel then examines the real issue, the nature and the extent of socialism in the ancient economy (553–570). Here it is that his hand is most clearly in evidence. Instead of arguing about interpretation, he plunges into fundamentals and evolves a set of basic definitions of socialistic theory, by which he estimates the place and the value of the work of his predecessor.

There are, he says, to be distinguished two chief types of socialism: that which is concerned with theoretical speculation, and that which is the result of popular agitation. Of the former type there are many examples in antiquity. The numerous Utopias and theories of the State themselves attest the fondness of the Greek for speculation of this kind. The second type, that which results from popular agitation, Professor Oertel divides into (a) political socialism, with a program of complete equality involving the division of state property but not of private property; (b) economic socialism, with a reform program involving the socialization of the means of production. Of these two divisions, the existence of the former in antiquity is certain⁵. The latter, however, is non-existent, and, inasmuch as this, according to present-day definition⁶, lies at the heart of what we understand to be socialism,

⁵The essay *The Social Question in the Third Century*, by W. W. Tarn, in *The Hellenistic Age*, 106–140 (Cambridge, at the University Press, 1923), for example, deals with the Hellenistic phenomena of this type.

⁶I may cite, merely by way of example, a definition given by John Spargo and George L. Arner, *Elements of Socialism*, 5 (New York, Macmillan, 1912): "Socialism is a criticism of existing society which attributes most of the poverty, vice, crime and other social evils of today to the fact that, through the private or class ownership of the social forces of production and exchange, the actual producers of wealth are exploited by a class of non-producers; a theory of social evolution according to which the rate and direction of social evolution are mainly determined by the development of the economic factors of production, distribution and exchange; a social forecast that the next epoch in the evolution of society will be distinguished by the social ownership and control of the principal agencies of production and exchange, and by an equalization of opportunity as a result of this socialization; a movement, primarily consisting of members of the wealth-producing class, which seeks to control all the powers of the State and to bring about the collective ownership and control of the principal means of production and exchange, in order that poverty, class antagonisms, vice and other ill results of the existing social system may be abolished, and that a new and better social system may be attained".

it is evident that, strictly speaking, there is no ancient socialism at all. Thus Professor Oertel's analysis destroys the very basis of his predecessor's structure.

The conclusion of his argument the reader may find useful, and I give it in translation, expanded very slightly for the sake of clearness:

'By way of summary we may say that socialistic theories and movements in antiquity originated as reactions to the encroachment of capital. In modern times the three aspects of socialism discussed separately above—namely, one emanating from the masses for political independence, one of a purely ideological nature, and the third looking toward reforms in production—are coming into actual operation. In antiquity, however, socialism remained an ideal of society in the sphere of fancy, playfulness, and theory, and the whole conception of reforming production was merely the final result of imagination in its most adventurous form. The *polis*, with its interference of the State into private life, was on the whole favorable to state socialistic measures, and to measures of a compensatory and alimentary nature provided for by regular legal action under existing conditions of property rights. The condition of industry and labor, however, was antagonistic to *real* socialism, with its revolutionary social program. Therein lies the great difference between antiquity and the present. Otherwise the points of contact between the ancient and the modern social movements are clear. They amount to the fact that ultimately the root of socialism is to be found, then as now, in the individuals of the masses inclining toward state socialistic tendencies. It is the great merit of Robert von Pöhlmann that he painted in striking colors this particular aspect of antiquity.

As I have intimated, the student who wants all the ancient literary sources on Greek socialism arranged and evaluated, and who can trust to his critical judgment not to be misled by modern analogies will go to von Pöhlmann's work as a matter of course. The reader who wants results or who has not the firmness to resist an attractive presentation will best keep to Oertel's summary. This he will find invaluable for its calm statement of a controversial question, for its temperate solution of the problem, and for its direction to the wide surrounding literature.

WASHINGTON SQUARE COLLEGE,
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

CASPER J. KRAEMER, JR.

A Handbook of Greek Mythology, Including Its Extension to Rome. By H. J. Rose. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company (undated. The Preface is dated in June, 1928). Pp. ix + 363. \$4.50¹.

Every reader of ancient literature sooner or later notices with astonishment how many and how great are the inconsistencies, often contradictions, in the stories told of the ancient deities of Greece and Rome. And if he hopes to find his difficulties solved by any complete account of the subject, he is only the more impressed by the fact that there never was any one self-consistent, orthodox account of such matters, no Greek or Roman "Bible" that might be appealed to in order to resolve a doubt or settle a dispute. Classical mythology was, in fact, a jungle of stories, a tangle of beliefs, a wilderness of cults and practices. Since it was the uncontrolled growth of men's philosophies, fancies, superstitions and beliefs, springing up in many places in a period of many generations, it is no wonder that it does not lend itself readily to any simple ex-

planation or even systematic exposition on the basis of any one principle.

In his introductory chapter Professor Rose very sanely points out that no one of the attempts made in the past to supply a universal explanation of myths can be held valid. They are not all misunderstood history, though some may be. Some may be allegories, and some may be symbolical; but to force them all into such frameworks only breeds confusion. Neither Euhemerus in ancient times with his imaginary island of Pancheat, nor in modern times Max Mueller with his equally fanciful disease of language has provided a universal solvent. In the last century there was a group of scholars who were bent on explaining everything in mythology as sun-myths, while just at present it is fashionable to see everywhere echoes of aboriginal "corn spirits" or "year demons." Doubtless, some of the myths may be accounted for by nearly every one of these theories, or by others that are not named here, and in his notes and comments Mr. Rose gives ample help to the student who wishes some hint as to how a given myth originated. But in the main his book is a straight forward narrative of what the myths and legends are, and is not intended to illustrate any theory of his own as to how they originated. There are eleven chapters, a bibliography, and a good index, which gives the pronunciation of the names—a very useful feature of the book. . . .

On the whole, this handbook may be recommended as one of the clearest, most comprehensive and yet concise manuals on the subject, and ought to find a wide usefulness. In his preface Mr. Rose disclaims all credit for originality, and states that he has only compiled his book from Roscher's "Lexikon," the work of Preller-Robert, and other modern writers on the subject—their name is legion. But the clear arrangement of material, the marshalling of the multitudinous details, and the sane and sober judgment displayed are all his own and merit praise. . . .

AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

GEORGE M. WHEELER

PHORMIO AND 'ART FOR ART'S SAKE'

IN THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 22.65-67 Miss Edith R. Godsey presents, under the title Phormio the Magnificent, a complete and enthusiastic review of the merits of this Terentian character. In the final paragraph Miss Godsey attempts to account for the zeal displayed by Phormio in the interest of Antipho and Phaedria. Her conclusion is that this consummate rogue was "Probably . . . a real friend of the *adulescentes* . . .", and believed in doing a thing well, or, as Professor Gilbert Norwood (cited by Miss Godsey) puts it, "...To all seeming <Phormio> concocts and administers a swindle on the principle of 'art for art's sake'..." In spite of Antipho's emotional tribute to Phormio, *Solus est homo amico amicus* (562), and Phormio's own profession of friendship for both young men (597-598), I find it hard to think of this *Bonorum extorior, legum contortor* (374) as swayed by friendship alone any more than are the kites and the hawks to which he compares himself (330).

Perhaps the theory of 'art for art's sake' is sufficient, but I find myself sceptical, and I am tempted to call attention once more to a phase of the matter¹ that seems to me too important to be ignored.

I am not at all convinced that Phormio was without hope of receiving "later favors from their fathers"

¹This review is reprinted from the New York Herald Tribune Books, Sunday, February 10, 1929. C. K. >

¹The substance of this is set forth in more detail in my article, The Sycophant-Parasite, in Classical Philology 15 (1920), 61-72.

(i.e. from the young men's fathers), as Miss Godsey assumes (67). Phormio was admittedly an orthodox Athenian 'sycophant'. Men of that profession were interested in 'art for art's sake', to be sure, but they were also interested in profit. The pall that had been thrown on Athenian democratic institutions by the Macedonian conquest had reduced the profits that a *sycophanta* could make by posing as *κῶων τοῦ δήμου* (Demosthenes 25.40) and attacking statesmen and politicians. He was more likely to eke out his living by petty activities. This situation seems to have made it increasingly difficult for the well-to-do family to get along without constant danger of litigation and blackmail. The experiences of the two families in the Phormio are excellent examples of this. The easiest way to meet the situation was to fight fire with fire. According to Xenophon (Memorabilia 2.9), Socrates had shrewdly suggested to his wealthy friend Crito that he hire a *κῶων* to keep off the *συκοφάνται* that made his life miserable. Crito found the arrangement entirely satisfactory; his regularly employed 'attorney', by offensive measures as well as by defensive measures, brought peace where confusion had been before. The employee also was satisfied. He was twitted, to be sure, for his servility and was dubbed a parasite (2.9.8), but there was much to gain in a material way without any serious loss of caste. It seems to me that it is to some such position of 'attorney', more common probably in the fourth century than in the fifth, that Phormio was aspiring, and that he was bestirring himself not so much for Antipho and Phaedria as for himself. His qualifications to be a permanent legal protector of the family were well established by his activities as narrated in the play, and, though he could hardly expect the affectionate regard of the two *senes*, he certainly commanded their awed respect, and perhaps that is all any attorney can count on. They could hardly do anything but accept him as their sycophant-parasite. It was safer to have him on their side than against them.

OBERLIN COLLEGE

J. O. LOFBERG

SPENCER AND OVID AGAIN¹

In the interesting passage, Spenser, Faerie Queene 1.1.8-9, there is rather more than meets the eye. Mrs. Coe is right in seeing a connection between Spenser and Ovid, but, when we fill in the links of the chain, we get what must surely be one of the most striking examples of the continuity of literature.

Spenser is here directly imitating his favorite poet, his "well of English undefiled", for in the Parlement of Foules 1.176-182 we actually find the words "the sayling firre". Mr. R. K. Root has pointed out that the Chaucerian passage is taken from the Bellum Trojanum of Joseph of Exeter, written about 1190 (see Chaucer's Dares, Modern Philology 15 [1917], 18 ff.). Joseph is imitating chiefly Ovid, but nothing

in classical epic escaped him, and no classical (Latin) epic was complete without its list of trees. Ennius leads the list (Annales 187-191, Vahlen²); he was followed by Vergil (Aeneid 6.179-182; there are several other lists in Georgics 2). Both were well known to Ovid, who in turn was imitated by Seneca, Oedipus 532-544, Leo, 545-557, Peiper and Richter), Lucan 3. 440-442, Statius, Thebais 6.91-106, Claudian, De Raptu Proserpinae 2.105-111. Thus we get a line stretching from 200 B. C. to 1600 A. D.

Since classical scholars may like to have a specimen of the style of Joseph of Exeter, I quote here in full the passage which Chaucer imitated (1.507-513):

Silva viret, vernat abies procera, cupressus
flebilis, interpres laurus, vaga pinus, oliva
concilians, cornus venatrix, fraxinus audax;
stat comitis patiens ulmus, nunquamque senescens
cantatrix buxus; paulo proclivius arum
ebria vitis habet, et dedignata latere,
cancicolum² poscit Phoebum.

WYGGESTON SCHOOL,
LEICESTER, ENGLAND

W. B. SEDGWICK

LIVY 21. 37. 2-3 AGAIN

It would seem that the reading *infosso acuto*, proposed as a substitute in Livy 21.37.2 for *infuso acuto* (see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 22.98-99, 160) is disposed of instantly by Pliny, N. H. 33.71 <Silices> igne et aceto rumpunt..., 23.57 <Acetum> saxa rumpit infusum..., and especially Juvenal 10.153 montem rumpit aceto. Juvenal is satirizing Livy, as he satirizes Herodotus in 10.173-175. Creditur olim velificatus Athos et quidquid Graecia mendax audet in historia.... With his unerring eye he has fixed on the keyword *aceto*, the stumbling block for the plain man then as now. The proposed reading *infosso acuto* is, of course, utterly out of keeping with Livy's sentences taken as a whole:....ardentia...saxa infuso aceto putrefaciunt. Ita torridam incendio rupem ferro pandunt. With *infosso acuto* the verb *putrefaciunt* would be very strange; the meaning it would be necessary to give to *infosso acuto* is covered by *ferro* (in *ferro pandunt*).

BARNARD COLLEGE

GERTRUDE M. HIRST

THE NEW YORK CLASSICAL CLUB THE CLASSICAL FORUM

The second meeting of The Classical Forum of The New York Classical Club was held at Barnard Hall, Columbia University, March 16. There were 47 present when the meeting began at 10:30. During the meeting 28 more arrived.

The topic was, Can we interest a greater number of students in continuing the study of Latin through the third and fourth years of the course? Miss Frances Maher, of Bushwick High School, told of the importance of having for the Vergil class a teacher who attracted pupils, Dr. Walter E. Foster, of Theodore Roosevelt High School, analyzed the difficulties of organizing a Vergil class, and Miss Anna P. MacVay, of Wadleigh High School, spoke of the coming bimillennial Vergil celebration as an aid toward enthusiasm for the study of Vergil. In the discussion which followed both Father Charles J. Deane, of Fordham University, and Professor C. N. Brown, of the College of the City of New York, stressed the point that students must go on with Vergil in High School in order to succeed in their Latin in College.

EDWARD COYLE, Censor

¹Mr. Sedgwick's paper came to me, on March 28, after Professor Cooper's comments were in type (22.166), but before the issue containing those remarks had been distributed. Both Professor Cooper and Mr. Sedgwick are commenting upon a brief note, by Mrs. Ada H. Coe, entitled Spenser and Ovid, 22.91-92. C. K. >

²Are we to read *canticolum*?

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